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The Indian government has denied visas to a **United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** delegation that sought to investigate conditions in Orissa, the eastern Indian state where persecution last year left over 60 dead and 50,000 homeless.

"We are particularly disappointed by the new Indian government's refusal to facilitate an official U.S. delegation to discuss religious freedom issues and government measures to counter communal violence, which has a religious component," **said commission chair Felice Gaer**. "Our commission has visited China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and over 20 other countries. India, a close ally of the United States, has been unique among democracies in delaying and denying **USCIRF's** ability to visit. **USCIRF** has been requesting visits since 2001."A